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Message Text

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12
ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

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R 110734Z APR 75
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3840
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
AMEMBASSY GABORONE

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, LT, SF
SUBJECT: MIGRANT LABOR SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE VIEW FROM LESOTHO

1. FROM APRIL 7-9 REGIONAL LABOR OFFICER ACCOMPANIED BY EMBASSY AND AID OFFICERS IN MASERU DISCUSSED MIGRANT LABOR SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WITH OFFICIALS OF LESOTHO GOVERNMENT, MASERU-BASED TRADE UNIONISTS AND CONTRACT MINE WORKERS EN ROUTE TO SOUTH AFRICA.

2. IMPRESSIONS GAINED INCLUDE FOLLOWING:
A. LESOTHO GOVERNMENT EXTREMELY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT FUTURE OF MIGRANT LABOR IN SOUTH AFRICA. FEARS PROPOSED MECHANIZATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN MINES PLUS STEPPED-UP RECRUITMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS WILL SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE SOUTH AFRICA'S DEPENDENCE ON BASOTHO MIGRANT LABOR IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE. FEARS COUNTRY
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WILL BE UNABLE TO ABSORB LARGE NUMBERS OF DISGRUNTLED EX-MINERS

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AND WOULD-BE MINERS (ALTHOUGH IT HAS ACCEPTED RECENTLY SUBMITTED WORLD BANK MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS ON WAYS AND MEANS OF PROVIDING LIMITED AMOUNTS OF ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT WITHIN LESOTHO). FEARS CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING MIGRANT-PRODUCED INCOME WHICH NOW JUST ABOUT MATCHES DOMESTIC GNP.

B. NEVERTHELESS, LESOTHO OFFICIALS EXPRESS AWARENESS THAT UNITED FRONT OF LABOR-EXPORTING COUNTRIES COULD SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHEN BARGAINING POSITION VIS-A-VIS SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY ENGAGED IN EXPLORATORY TALKS ON THIS SUBJECT WITH SEVERAL COUNTRIES, APPARENTLY INCLUDING MALAWI AND MOZAMBIQUE (FRELIMO). GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO HELD DISCUSSIONS IN MASERU WITH SAG AND SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMBER OF MINES OFFICIALS AND HAS BEEN GIVING HIGH PRIORITY CONSIDERATION TO WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPROVING DIALOGUE WITH SOUTH AFRICA WITH VIEW TO NEGOTIATING BETTER DEAL FOR BASOTHO MINERS (INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, PROVISION FOR OCCASIONAL HOME AND FAMILY VISITS DURING LIFE OF CONTRACT).

C. IN THIS CONNECTION, MR. M.T. MASHOLOGU, TOP ASSISTANT TO PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO UNITED STATES, OBSERVED THAT SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICIALS HAVE ADOPTED MORE CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THEIR LESOTHO COUNTERPARTS IN WAKE OF RECENT MINE RIOTS. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID, LESOTHO GOVERNMENT SIMPLY NOT EQUIPPED AT THIS TIME WITH FACTS, FIGURES AND EXPERIENCE TO DEAL ON ANYTHING LIKE EQUAL BASIS WITH SOUTH AFRICANS. MOREOVER, HE ADDED, SAG HAS NOT YET MADE ANY EFFORT WHATSOEVER TO INVOLVE LESOTHO IN PROCEEDINGS OF RECENTLY-APPOINTED SAG INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO MINE DISTURBANCES MANY OF WHICH HAVE INVOLVED BASOTHO MINERS.

3. AIRGRAM FOLLOWS WITH COMMENTS ON TRADE UNION AND MIGRANT WORKER ATTITUDES.
DEGRACE

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